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AN

ADDRESS

TO

DR. PRIESTLEY,

CONTAINING

DESULTORY OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

GENERAL INUTILITY

OF

RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSIES;

AND ON SOME

ASSERTIONS of the DOCTOR's

CONTAINED IN HIS

LETTERS to Mr. BURKE.

By WILLIAM PETTMAN.

All your perſecutions have ariſen from *trinitarian*, i. e. *idolatrous* chriſtians.

Prieſtley's Addreſs to the Jews prefixed to his Diſcourſe on the Reſurrection of Jeſus.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

PREFACE.

THE following Addreſs is not preſented to the world as a ſtudied performance. It was occaſioned by an Aſſertion of Doctor Prieſtley's which may be ſeen in the Title Page.—It was undertaken on the impulſe of a moment, and written, for the moſt part, in thoſe hours which would otherwiſe have been devoted to ſleep.—It is to be conſidered as nothing more than a feeble attempt to reflect the Doctor's mode of writing back on himſelf; and if he ſhould be offended with the writer, he is, for once, requeſted to forgive with the ſame readineſs that he wiſhes to be forgiven.

The Aſſertion contained in the former part of the firſt paragraph in page 14 is to be conſidered as an imitation of the Doctor's manner

of writing when he treats of *Trinitarians*. It is to be conſidered alſo as the neareſt way of coming to a concluſion in every doubtful caſe. And if the Reader will take the pains to read *Unity* for *Trinity* and *Trinitarians* for *Unitarians*, he will ſee how eaſily the aſſertion may be converted to an oppoſite uſe. In much the ſame manner may a variety of paſſages that are to be met with in Doctor Prieſtley's works, be made to apply with equal effect and propriety in defence of ſuch opinions as, in his judgment, contribute to make *Trinitarians* appear *ridiculous*: But if bare aſſertions are ſufficient to carry conviction to the mind, there is ſome hope left that the Doctor may not yet be too far gone to be influenced by them, when he perceives them to be uſed by others as freely and as extenſively as by himſelf. And as the Doctor always writes with warmth when he is writing in defence of a favourite doctrine, he will doubtleſs be willing and ready to make all proper allowances for the warmth of another.

In the courſe of the following obſervations no attempt whatever is made to impoſe the judgment of the Author on the underſtanding

of

of his Readers; for to them he willingly ſubmits what he has written with all poſſible deference and reſpect, entreating their candour where it would be folly to expect their approbation.

The Reader is requeſted to correct the following Errors:

Page 8, line 15, for *able* read *ble*; and for *irreſiſtable* read *irreſiſtible*.
P. 11, line 25, dele comma *after* and place it *before* the word *thing*.
P. 15, line 23, for *baba* read *barba*.
P. 24, line 18, after *are* inſert a comma.
P. 40, line 19, for *Was* read *Were*.
P. 56, line 4, for *deſart* read *deſert*.

p 5 line 3 for ~~acted~~ have acted and judged read have omitted to act and judge.

AN

ADDRESS

TO

DR. PRIESTLEY.

SIR,

IT is an important part of the duty which we owe to ourſelves, and to our Maker, to be ſatisfied in our own minds concerning the validity of the doctrines which we profeſs to believe. No reaſonable man will believe a doctrine that he ſuſpects to be unfounded in truth. But truth may be divided into three ſorts: *indiſputable truth*; or ſuch as cannot be denied: *demonſtrable truth*; or ſuch as may be proved beyond doubt or contradiction: and *probable truth*; or ſuch as we cannot eſtabliſh in a manner altogether *unobjectionable*; but ſuch as there is more evidence *for* than *againſt*.

The *Atheiſt* rejects the firſt principle of *all* Religions, and all the conſequent deductions that flow from the admiſſion of it. The *Deiſt* admits the firſt principle, but ac-

knowledges nothing more. The *Jew* allows the truth of *revealed* Religion; but denies the authenticity or genuineneſs of *Chriſtianity*. The *Chriſtian* ſubſcribes to the belief of *Chriſt's* appearance on earth---of his preaching, performing of miracles---and of his paſſion, death, and reſurrection; but he reſerves to himſelf the privilege of chooſing what other particular doctrines he ſhall renounce or acknowledge. Hence it happens that *Chriſtians* divide themſelves into a variety of *Sects*. Of theſe, the two moſt oppoſite to each other in principle are the *Trinitarians* and the *Unitarians*. And ſince the *unitarian* doctrine is ſo zealouſly propagated in the preſent age, thoſe who are of the *trinitarian* perſuaſion, will do well to examine the ground on which they ſtand, with a view principally to their individual and internal ſatisfaction, rather than with a view to oppoſe thoſe who do not think as they do.

In the preſent age, men do not write by inſpiration. Of two doctrines diametrically oppoſite to each other, if one is true, the other muſt be falſe. This concluſion admits of no modification. And the conſequence

quence is, that *unitarians* or *trinitarians* muſt be wrong. The only point to be conſidered is, which of them is right. But this point can never be determined by controverſy. Which doctrine ſoever of the two we adopt, our faith muſt not depend on the knowledge, the judgment, or the deciſion of another. It muſt be founded in the conviction of our own minds.

There is no culpability in adhering to a doctrine that we believe to be conformable to the general ſenſe and meaning of the ſacred writings. And as long as we ſuffer ourſelves to be guided and influenced by them, the conviction of our minds will be more valuable to us than the popularity of our names, the celebrity of our works, or the aggrandizement of our perſons. Honeſty may be unſucceſsful---it may be ſuſpected---it may be puniſhed, but it can never be rendered worthleſs. Juſt ſo it is with religious principles. They may be diſputed, they may be ridiculed---they may expoſe the poſſeſſors of them to contempt, to degradation, and to death; but if they are founded in ſincerity

they will always produce patience, moderation, benevolence and fortitude of mind.

A man of reflection, and one who poſſeſſes a liberal and benevolent heart, would not wiſh, by any improper means whatever, to influence the judgment, even of his own children, on a ſubject of ſuch vaſt importance to them as the doctrine of a Trinity. He would not wiſh to preclude them from reading even *your* works in defence of *unitarianiſm*. He would only ſeriouſly and affectionately exhort them to make an impartial, fair, and candid ſtatement of the arguments on each ſide, and draw that concluſion from them, which their own judgment might direct them to do; taking the ſacred writings, and theſe only, for their invariable guide. For in deciding on doctrines that we believe to be ſtrongly recommended by the authority of Scripture, we ought, each of us, to recollect that our underſtandings are given to us by God; and that we are anſwerable to him, and to him only, for the application we make of them in determining on doctrines of faith. Our determination, it is certain, muſt be right or wrong. If it be right,

we

we can have nothing to fear; if it be wrong, we ſhall, in ſuch inſtances, be culpable ſo far only as we have omitted to act and judge in conformity to thoſe ſentiments of conviction which we FEEL, and not *barely* BELIEVE to exiſt in our own minds; but which no one elſe can either feel for us, or be accountable to us for. It is only the *motive* and *intention* of the *heart*, that can make an erroneous faith dangerouſly ſinful; or that can conſtitute the eſſential difference which ſubſiſts between an Idolator and a *true* Worſhipper of God. For the Deity is as merciful as he is juſt. And we ſhall have but little to fear from the ſeverity of God's dealing with us, in matters of this kind, if we have but been faithful to our own hearts and conſciences. But we muſt remember that there is a Rule given to us, by which the judgment is to be directed; and with which the underſtanding is to be previouſly exerciſed. We are not left to the mercy of the ignorant and ſuperſtitious; neither are we committed to the diſpoſal of every hypothetical philoſopher.

Faith is founded on Revelation; and Revelation has God for its Author. To this ſource it is neceſſary for every one diligently to apply himſelf. Here it is that we are principally to ſearch for materials to vindicate thoſe doctrines which we ſeverally believe. And our zeal in propagating our reſpective tenets is a preſumptive proof that we are ſincere in our attachment to them. There is, however, nothing more certain than that an internal unity of doctrine is, and muſt be, maintained in Revelation. Howſoever we may be divided in our opinions, there certainly could have been no real diviſion ſubſiſting in points of doctrine among the inſpired writers. The doctrines of faith which they taught, muſt have been uniformly the ſame. Unlike the Chriſtians of the preſent day, they muſt have been unanimous in the belief of each of the particular doctrines which they were ſeverally ſent forth to preach. They could not go beyond the *meaſure* that was *given* to them. And it would contribute much to the encouragement and augmentation of chriſtian harmony, if the controverſial writers of the preſent day were innocent

of

of every attempt to depart from ſuch excellent examples.

The conceptions of the human mind are limited and imperfect. They are incapable of admitting full and correct ideas of the nature and attributes of the Supreme Being. If this was not the caſe, we ſhould have no occaſion to exerciſe our reaſoning powers on any of the articles of religious faith. Every controverſy would be decided in a moment. Or rather, controverſies of a religious kind would have no exiſtence. It is owing to defects, or to the want of capacity, in the human underſtanding, and to that preference which every man is ready to give to his own deciſions, that religious controverſy is at once ſo general, and ſo diffuſe.

The judgment and the faith of every man is right in his own opinion, At leaſt it ought to be ſo. The only queſtion to be aſked, is, How he came to form ſuch a particular judgment, or to adopt ſuch a particular opinion? This queſtion is a very neceſſary one. It will ſuggeſt to him the propriety of examining into the validity of the doctrines which he profeſſes to believe, and

the manner by which he became attached to the belief of them.

In the courſe of this examination the greateſt difficulty will be to diſcover the prejudices, and to correct the errors, that we may have imbibed in the courſe of our education.

As Religion is not an art of human invention, its doctrines are incapable of being reduced to any fixed and determinate ſyſtem that will be ſuitable to men of different perſuaſions. They muſt ſtand or fall with the authenticity of that communication which has been revealed to us; the divine authority of which is firmly eſtabliſhed on the infalliable baſis of irreſiſtable teſtimony. And it is from that communication alone that they are to be examined and proved.

A Chriſtian ſhould be fully and firmly perſuaded in his own mind that what he believes is agreeable to the general tenor of Scripture. He ſhould conſider that the firſt Revelation of God's will was *univerſal*. Hence it happens that there are no deſcriptions of men, among whom ſome traits of a religious kind are not to be found. The ſecond Revelation, under the *Moſaic* diſpenſation,

was

was communicated only to one particular deſcription of people. And the ſeverity of its laws may ſerve as a convincing proof that the minds of that people, in thoſe times, were ignorant and depraved, and their manners barbarous and unſocial, to an extreme. For this reaſon it appears to have been abſolutely neceſſary, that much of their Religion ſhould conſiſt in the obſervation and performance of numerous external rites and ceremonies. If little attention was, comparatively ſpeaking, paid, at that time, to the Religion of the heart, it appears to have been becauſe their morals had become ſo vitiated, their underſtandings ſo uncultivated, and becauſe their education had been ſo much neglected, that it would have been morally impoſſible to have made the neceſſary impreſſions on their minds, with any probability of ſucceſs. In thoſe times, the Nature and Attributes of God ſeem not to have been the prevailing objects of general inquiry. It is highly probable that the beſt men were contented to believe what was taught them, without entering into any examination of the principles of their Religion; or requiring any explanation

tion of the preciſe import of the words and phraſes, in which thoſe principles were conveyed to them. Inquiries generally keep pace with knowledge. He that knows much, wiſhes to be informed of more; and he that knows but little, adapts his inquiries to his knowledge; and is too often afraid to aſk for inſtruction, for fear of expoſing his ignorance. This therefore, does not appear to have been an age of inquiry. And the doctrine of the Trinity appears to have been frequently and regularly taught and inculcated by the ſeveral preachers and prophets of the Old Teſtament, and received by thoſe who heard it, without having been ſo much as once diſputed or examined by them. And as the inſpired teachers and writers of the Goſpel no where attempt to overthrow any doctrines that had been previouſly communicated by God to his people; ſo neither have they any where preſumed to teach or eſtabliſh a ſingle doctrine that was new. For this reaſon, the Old and the New Teſtament ſhould be invariably conſidered as one uniform rule, by which we are to form our judgment of the probable truth, or prevailing aſcendency, of any doctrine that

appears

appears to be inculcated in either. And ſuch doctrinal opinions of ours, as ſhall be found to be contrary to the general tenor of theſe books, conſidered and conſulted as an undivided body, ſhould be rejected as falſe, how conſiſtent ſoever they may be with our natural conceptions; and the conſequent contrary opinions ſhould be adopted, how irreconcileable ſoever they may appear to be in that finite and partial view of them, which we are here enabled to take. Otherwiſe there would be no merit in faith. For there aſſuredly is no occaſion to doubt of the *poſſibility* of a Trinity of Perſons in one God, only becauſe we are unable to comprehend it. Whatever we may fancy to ourſelves of the Being and Attributes of God, it is altogether certain that we are unable to think of him as he is. It is therefore our duty to think of him as he has taught and inſtructed us to do. And in no other way can we think of him without placing ourſelves in the ſtead of God, and repreſenting him as a Deity of our own forming. It is an awful, and a preſumptuous thing, to contemplate God with a view to make his Nature corre-

ſpond with our ideas. Every thing around us is ſufficient to convince us that we know but little, and that little, imperfectly. Man is a compound of ignorance and inconſiſtency; and when he adventures to decide upon doctrines that lie beyond the reach of his conception, he does but labour to prove what his finite capacity is unable to comprehend. This is equally the caſe with thoſe who endeavour to *explain* the *trinitarian* doctrine, and thoſe who attempt to *diſprove* it. Each appears to be more zealous to obtain a victory, than to eſtabliſh a truth. Scripture is divided againſt itſelf, and is made to ſay and unſay the ſame thing, until the true practical ſpirit of it is loſt in the heat of intemperate zeal. The controverſialiſt, if you will but believe him, is always on the right ſide: But when he diſregards the language of love, of meekneſs, gentleneſs and candour, by which our reverence for God, our regard for Religion, our knowledge of ourſelves, and our affection for each other is diſtinguiſhed; then it is that every diſpaſſionate inquirer after truth muſt allow, that the zeal of ſuch an one proceeds not from a principle of true piety.

Thoſe

Thoſe in whoſe minds any doubts may ariſe concerning the truth of the *trinitarian* doctrine, ſhould conſider ſeriouſly from whence thoſe doubts originated. Whether from any ſcruples of their own, ariſing from an obſcurity in the language of Scripture? From any difficulty in the nature of the doctrine there contained? or, From any objections of others which have been made to ſuch doctrines?

Scruples ariſing from an obſcurity in the language of Scripture, can be removed only by a diligent and perſevering inquiry into the moſt probable and apparently prevailing purport and meaning of every doubtful paſſage, by comparing it with ſuch ſimilar, correſponding, or parallel paſſages as occur in different places. For no particular detached paſſages of Scripture are at our private diſpoſal. They are all links of one compact and undivided chain; and as ſuch they are intimately connected with each other. They are intended at once as meaſures of faith and rules of reaſoning.

The difficulties which await us in the ſtudy of any particular doctrine, conſiſt not in the doctrine itſelf, but in our inability to conceive,

ceive, explain, and illuſtrate the Nature of it.

The doctrine of the Trinity is ſo plainly and ſo repeatedly inculcated in the Scriptures, that the moſt obſtinate *Unitarians* cannot deny the evidences that there ſtand as witneſſes againſt them. Their only objects are to combat the force, by diſputing the genuineneſs of them; and to reject the application, by arguing on the inconſiſtency of them. And we may as well reject the Goodneſs and the Power of God, by arguments drawn from the admiſſion of ſin and miſery into the world. For the apparent inconſiſtency is not greater in the one caſe, than it is in the other.

Trinitarians receive the doctrine they maintain as an article of faith, becauſe they conceive it to come recommended to them by the authority of inſpiration, as well as by many *in their opinion* expreſs declarations of Chriſt himſelf. Was I to be aſked---- What is it that makes men *Trinitarians?* or ---What is it that makes men *Unitarians?* I ſhould preſume to make the ſame reply ſerve as an anſwer to both queſtions; namely, that *It is faith founded on the teſtimony of Scripture,*

ture, agreeable to thoſe apprehenſions which we have of that teſtimony; and I ſhould preſume to ſuppoſe, that ſuch an anſwer would ſufficiently exculpate either party from the charge of idolatry. For idolatry is a departure from *conviction*, and not from *judgment*. But was I to venture to aſk---What is it that makes men *Unitarians?* I will preſume to pronounce, that the anſwer would be, *It is the exerciſe of our faculties, agreeably to the dictates of right* REASON. And I readily grant that *Reaſon* is the beſt pretext for *Atheiſm*, as well as for *Infidelity*, that men can poſſibly have recourſe to. It is an *Atlas* that is capable of ſuſtaining and comprehending every thing. And yet its inſignificance in thoſe parts of the world, which are not now enlightened by Religion, but whoſe inhabitants have forgotten, or perverted, thoſe principles of divine knowledge which was once communicated to them, is ſcarcely to be credited. Every examination of the human mind, and every reflection on the ſtate of ignorant and babarous deſcriptions of mankind, is ſufficient to convince us, that man can know nothing of God or Religion, *in the firſt inſtance*, but

by

by *inſpiration*, or *revelation*; nor in the *ſecond*, but by *inſtruction* communicated from one generation of men to another.

With reſpect to the objections of others, it is evident that they ought to have no weight with us, independent of that which they receive from the authority of the Scripture. And of the force of that weight it is proper for every perſon to judge for himſelf. Nor is any one to be branded with abſurdity becauſe he cannot ſee with the eyes, or diſcern with the underſtanding, of another. The principal error on both ſides lies with thoſe who have not candour enough to judge liberally and charitably of one another; but who, like *Cain*, are jealous of the authority and pre-eminence of thoſe who differ from them. To whatever controverſy a truly religious man turns his attention, his prevailing ſentiment, and his unceaſing prayer, is, *may truth prevail on which ſide ſoever it lies*. For there is no crime in being convicted of an error; neither is there any pleaſure in the idea of living in one. And yet in all controverſies there is great danger of being betrayed into aſperity of language.

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The *Unitarian* condemns the doctrine of the Trinity becauſe he *thinks* it is not *rational*, and *ſuſpects* that it is not *ſcriptural*. The *Trinitarian* ſupports it becauſe he *perceives* it to be *ſcriptural*, and *believes* it to be *divine*. Is the *Unitarian* apprized that there is no religious doctrine *purely* RATIONAL? On what evidence does he reſt the doctrine of a life to come, without which all other doctrines are vain and nugatory? Certainly on the very ſame evidence that the *Trinitarian* reſts the doctrine of the *Trinity*; namely, on the evidence of Scripture Hiſtory. Again, on what evidence does he reſt his belief of the Being or Exiſtence of God? Does he not reſt it on the ſame ſacred evidence? Or is there any chain of *natural cauſes* by which we may know God by his *works*? Thoſe who maintain that there is, are obliged to admit the doctrine of innate ideas, than which there is nothing more contradictory to the experience of mankind; and they are, at the ſame time, unable to account for the ignorance of mankind in ſtates of uncultivated life.

Every man who believes that there is a God, is capable of knowing how he came

by that belief. And if he is inclined to act candidly and honeſtly with himſelf, he will be ready to acknowledge that he obtained it by his communication with mankind through the medium of language, by which he became acquainted with the opinions of thoſe who are now living, and of thoſe with whom he could not now have converſed. Faith is the firſt principle of all Religion; and *inſtruction* (in which term I preſume that Revelation may be properly included) and *inſpiration* are the two only means by which we are capable of becoming acquainted with a knowledge of God and immaterial beings. If, according to the principle of the Quakers, there is really a light within, which is diſtinct from reaſon, and yet is not inſpiration; the proper concluſion is, that all mankind are as capable of perceiving and recogniſing this light as the Quakers are. It is the ſame thing with reſpect to the principles of Natural Religion. If they exiſt in the mind, they are capable of being equally well perceived and explained by all mankind. And there would be no occaſion for men to be inſtructed in principles that are always preſent with,

with, and familiar, to them. For we cannot know and not know at the ſame time. In all our inquiries there is therefore a certain point beyond which it is unwiſe and unprofitable for us to go; becauſe beyond this point all is conjecture and hypotheſis.

To philoſophical ſpeculators reaſon has affixed no determinate bounds. To religious diſputants it may be ſaid hitherto mayeſt thou come with ſafety but no further. And happy are the men who, like *Saint Paul*, are not deſirous to *ſtretch* themſelves *beyond* the *meaſure* of the *rule* which *God* hath *diſtributed to them*; but are willing to adhere to the inſtruction of the *Holy Ghoſt*, and to content themſelves with *comparing ſpiritual things with ſpiritual*; remembering that Reaſon would have been for ever incapable of enabling them to have arrived at that knowledge which has, from time to time, been communicated to the world by the Spirit of God. For what mankind could have known by a proper application and exertion of their Natural Powers, it would have been beneath the dignity of the Deity to have revealed to them. In the order of Providence, according to the arrange-

ment of events in the ſacred hiſtory, it is evident that Revelation preceded all religious worſhip. And it is clear, beyond contradiction, that in the ſucceeding ages of the world, where the knowledge of God was almoſt obliterated, or groſsly perverted, it required a ſucceſſion of Revelations to bring men back to thoſe very principles from which they had unhappily departed. So that, independent of chriſtian doctrines and *trinitarian* principles, it is very evident that the purity of religious knowledge was, and ſtill is, incapable of being acquired, or even recovered, by any inquiries, exertions, or inſtructions, that are *ſimply* RATIONAL. And whatever may be our views in endeavouring to eſtabliſh the particular doctrines which we eſpouſe, it is abſolutely certain that the merit of our zeal can be no otherwiſe pleaſing to God than as it proceeds from that only acceptable principle of religious actions, which conſiſts in a deſire to approve ourſelves to Him who is acquainted with all the motives of the heart, and all the intentions of the mind.

The effects of pure Religion, or a right Faith, are always eſſentially the ſame. They differ

differ not in *kind* but only in *degree*. Thus *ſome* ſtars appear to differ from others, not becauſe they are unlike, but, becauſe they are more or leſs remote from our view.

Had *trinitarian* principles been regularly attended to by the *Jews*, it is highly probable that they would not have been ſo often accuſed of *forgetting*, and *forſaking*, God. And it is likewiſe highly probable that they would not then have crucified our Lord. For we know that the only crime which they brought, or could have brought, againſt him, was that for which he was arraigned, condemned, and executed; and this was the very ſame crime from which the *Unitarians* are induſtriouſly ſtriving to exonerate him; but it was, notwithſtanding, a crime from which he did not once attempt to exculpate himſelf. It is plain that the accuſation of the *Jews* againſt him was for *Blaſphemy*. And this *Blaſphemy* conſiſted in declaring his *co-eternity* and *co-equality* with the *Father*. "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, *becauſe* he made himſelf the SON of GOD. But previous to this we find the *Jews* took up ſtones to ſtone him, *becauſe* he ſaid "I AND

MY FATHER ARE ONE." And the *equality* of our Saviour with his Father is as plainly inculcated by him as any doctrine in the Scriptures. So that, on the *Unitarian* principle, it muſt be acknowledged that our Saviour *deſerved* to die. For if he was not God, he could not have been equal to God; and if he was not equal to God, nothing could juſtify him in adopting particular modes of ſpeech which he well knew would be offenſive to the Jews, provided no particular doctrine was thereby purpoſely intended by him to be conveyed *by* or implied *in* them. It was not uſual for our Saviour to ſay things which were ſuperfluous or unneceſſary. Neither was it cuſtomary for him to attempt to prove *that* which thoſe who ſaw his miracles, and the independent manner in which he wrought them, ought to have taken for granted. But I am not diſputing the point. I am only alluding to matters of fact. And I am ſorry to obſerve that you ſeem to condemn *Trinitarians* with exactly the ſame ſpirit of violent oppoſition, animoſity of mind, ſelf-ſufficiency of knowledge, obſtinacy of opinion, and inflexibility of temper, that the

Jews

Jews condemned Chriſt with. But ſuppoſing *Trinitarians* ARE *idolators*, be pleaſed to recollect that you are not yet inveſted with the robe of infallibility, nor with the power to extirpate or crucify them. Nor would it be amiſs if you would be pleaſed ſeriouſly to conſider whether it is not much better to be called bad names by *other* people, than it is to demean *ourſelves* ſo much as to call other people names which we think will be offenſive or diſpleaſing to them. But do not ſuppoſe that I feel myſelf aggrieved by the epithet which you have beſtowed upon me in common with *all trinitarians*; becauſe in doing ſo you will be deceiving yourſelf. It is thoſe who expoſe *themſelves* who have the greateſt reaſon to be diſpleaſed. Good humour is always acceptable let it come from what quarter it will. No good can come by quarreling with one another. If we are divided in our ſentiments there is no juſt cauſe that we ſhould be divided in our hearts. Unity and concord are always practicable; and they can never be unſeaſonable. Suppoſing men were to write on friendly terms, perfectly devoid of anger and animoſity; would there be any

harm in that? It is always beſt when controverſies of a religious kind are conducted with urbanity on each ſide. Beſides, religious controverſies can ſerve only as exerciſes for our talents. Diſputations of this kind may be compared to travelling in a circle, where we are continually running from the centre to the circumference and back again; or *directing* our courſe, either uniformly or irregularly, between each until we arrive at the ſame point from which we at firſt ſat out.

Good nature and good ſenſe are valuable ingredients, and happy is the man that poſſeſſes and enjoys a proper proportion of each. Such an one will be *firm* without being *uncharitable*; and, on proper occaſions, he will be *ſarcaſtick* without being *miſchievous*.

Controverſies are for the moſt part, of a vindictive complection. They either find men tart and waſpiſh; or they make, and, too often, leave them ſo.

Controverſies are engagements between the underſtandings of men. And of all engagements they are the moſt dangerous and fatal in their conſequences. Many a virtue is ſacrificed

crificed---many an intemperate paſſion is called forth and indulged---many an amiable character is repreſented in the worſt light---many a weighty argument is turned into ridicule and treated as abſurd--and all for no other poſſible purpoſe than to gain an imaginary aſcendency over an opponent. Do not therefore do me the injuſtice to ſuppoſe that I am going voluntarily to enter the liſt as a controverſial writer. I only mean to requeſt your attention to the remarks that are here offered for your conſideration. For man left to himſelf is a very ignorant being. He knows nothing but what he is taught. He poſſeſſes nothing but what he has received. And *Doctor Prieſtley* and the *Philoſophical Katterfelto* were, in their cradles, equally ignorant; and equally unable, of themſelves, in the *firſt inſtance,* to emerge from that ignorance. What a reflection! How degrading the thought! And yet who can deny the truth of it? Will you, Sir, be kind enough to apply the obſervation? or, Are you diſpleaſed with the remark? I have no intention to diſpleaſe any one; but it cannot be expected that the chriſtian world at large ſhould acknowledge a benefit

benefit that it has not received. The *trinitarian* principle ſtands preciſely on the ſame foundation that it did when you entered *into* the world. It has neither been abſolutely *diſproved* on the one hand, nor unobjectionably *explained* on the other. It is alike impoſſible for man to do either. As a *myſtery* it is incapable of *explanation*. As a *doctrine* it is incapable of being either *proved* or *diſproved*, but *by the evidence of Scripture*. Revelation is the only baſis on which it ſtands. Take away that baſis and the doctrine will fall of itſelf. Like the *Jews* we ſhall, then, ſoon forſake God, and depart from that faith which has once been delivered to us. For when the *Unitarians* ſhall have expunged ſuch parts and portions of Scripture as are obnoxious to their principles, the deformed and mutilated ſtate of the remainder will, I believe, ſcarcely be thought worthy of the attention of any other deſcription of Chriſtians whatever. Reflect on theſe things, and contemplate on the probable conſequences of *unitarian* zeal, and you will, perhaps, find but little reaſon to rejoice at the fall of *trinitarianiſm*, provided ſuch a circumſtance was to take place.

Whoever

Whoever cannot reſt the doctrine of the Trinity on the ſame pillar that the Church of England hath reſted it, ought to abandon the belief of it. For that doctrine which is not to be found in the Scriptures, nor can be proved by them, ſhe herſelf declares to be no object or article of a Chriſtian's faith.

Should it be aſked---Do all the members of the Church of England believe in the Doctrine of the Trinity? I ſhould not heſitate to anſwer---Yes. For if they do not believe in this doctrine, whether they be laity or clergy, they are not *members* of the Church; they are only *attendants on* or *performers of* her *ſervice*. Should it be aſked---Are the members of the Church of England of one opinion concerning this *doctrine?* I anſwer, it is impoſſible that they ſhould be. Of this ſubject, was I to ſay that no two men who have ſtudied it attentively think of it exactly alike, I preſume I ſhould not be ſuſpected of ſpeaking an untruth. Yet I know not how this can be applied as an argument to perſuade men from the belief of it. The Deity is certainly indebted to no man for believing ſo much only as he cannot but believe. The belief of ſuch

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an one conſiſts in *knowledge*; it is not an act of *faith*. And without faith, we are told, it is impoſſible to pleaſe God. But there is a kind of belief that ariſes from reflection and obſervation, and borders upon neceſſity. A belief that God is eternal is of this kind. We know that we exiſt, and we know that we did not *cauſe* our exiſtence; and this knowledge naturally leads us to make the ſame reflection on thoſe who exiſted before us, and ſo on until we arrive at what we are willing to call a firſt cauſe: and if we were diſpoſed to deny the eternity of this firſt cauſe, and to ſay that no being could exiſt without beginning to exiſt, the difficulty would be as great as that which attends the belief of it. For ſince ſome beings do exiſt, ſome one muſt neceſſarily and originally have exiſted from nothing, or there muſt have been ſomething to have cauſed that exiſtence. And the *beginning* of a firſt cauſe is as difficult to be accounted for on the ſuppoſition that it *begun* to exiſt, as on the ſuppoſition that it exiſted WITHOUT *beginning* to exiſt. So that the doctrine of the *Eternity* of God ſeems to be readily received, becauſe as great difficulties will

will meet us on any other ſuppoſition as on this. With reſpect therefore to this doctrine reaſon evidently carries its own remedy along with it, by involving the *unbeliever* in as great a difficulty as it does the *believer*; which is not the caſe with many other doctrines.

You appear to claim to yourſelf no ſmall ſhare of merit in attempting to clear away, by the publication of your "Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity," a deal of rubbiſh that was thrown, as you ſuppoſe, either accidently or intentionally, between us and truth. But you have not yet affected the foundation on which the edifice of our faith is built. The roots of a large, tall, and flouriſhing, oak, do not lie on the ſurface of the earth, expoſed to the view of every curious, inquiſitive, and querulous viſitor. Nor is it in the power of men, unaſiſted by inſtruments of art, to tear them from the beds in which they are repoſited by the hand of nature. And ſhould you again dip your pen into the ſpirit of controverſy, it will be an act of prudence in you to analyſe the different ingredients of which it is compounded,

and

and to give a faithful account of the ſpecific qualities of each, that all apprehenſions of danger ariſing from the publication of your principles may be totally removed, and your pacific and brotherly intentions clearly and ſatisfactorily demonſtrated. For you cannot but know that ſome of your readers begin to doubt of the purity of your intentions; and where there is reaſon for doubt, there muſt, one would ſuppoſe, have exiſted ſome cauſe for ſuſpicion. One thing, however, there is, which particularly expoſes the weakneſs of the foundation on which the *unitarian* principle is ſuppoſed to ſtand, and that is the eager readineſs with which you, and moſt *unitarian* writers, graſp at, and make the moſt of, every opportunity that occurs, of reminding the world how highly probable it is that ſuch and ſuch particular learned men, who had ſet out with *trinitarian* principles, had adopted oppoſite ones juſt before the termination of their lives. As if circumſtances of this kind, however probable, numerous, or true, could have any effect on the doctrine itſelf. It is at leaſt the ſign of a doubtful cauſe when men are obliged to have recourſe

to,

to, and adopt, ſuch unavailing means to ſtrengthen the force of their arguments, and to gain an aſcendency over the judgment of mankind. It is forcibly taking the reader by the hand to divert him from the exerciſe of his own underſtanding.

In determining on ſubjects of this kind, there is not one perſon's judgment that a man ought to be ſo tenacious of as his own. A tranſition from one doctrine to another is eaſy to thoſe only who are ignorant of, or indifferent about, conſequences that muſt ultimately affect themſelves.——You, Sir, have ſet out from a point with a view to reach another point which you then had in contemplation; but which, notwithſtanding your induſtry and perſeverance, you have not yet arrived at. And with me it is a matter of doubt whether you have not, in reality, although unintentionally, receded from it. In the ſcience of polemical divinity every adventurer is his own navigator. Vanity is his compaſs. Opinion is the helm he ſteers with. The place departed from lies generally in the latitude of weakneſs, and in the longitude of abſurdity. The place arrived at lies frequently

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in the latitude of certainty, and in the longitude of conceit. Succeſs is the diſtance by obſervation. And the courſes copied from the traverſe table will generally be found to be from ingenuity to error, from error to uncharitableneſs, from uncharitableneſs to obſtinacy, from obſtinacy to folly, and from folly to preſumption. Here he is too frequently arreſted by pride, which makes him inſenſible of the danger of his ſituation, and of the inefficacy of his labour. Now, was your life to be prolonged for ten thouſand years,---was you to ſtudy, to preach, and to write, until the angel ſhould put a final period to the duration of time, you would find it impoſſible, even then, to effect a revolution in the religious principles of thoſe who prefer the teſtimony of Scripture to the enticing energy of perſuaſive eloquence and refined ingenuity.

The late Mr. Weſley, who was ſufficiently advanced in years to form a tolerably accurate eſtimate of the effects of religious controverſy, took occaſion (in a diſcourſe which he delivered in the preſbyterian meeting-houſe at Sandwich in the latter part of the year

year 1788) to make the following declaration ---" In my younger days I was fond of con-" troverſy, but I have now lived long enough " in the world to know better than to quar-" rel or diſpute with any man about Re-" ligion." So unexpected a conceſſion from a man who had employed much of his time in controverſial writing, muſt have proceeded from a conviction of its general inutility. For while one perſon is pulling this way, and another is pulling that way, the cord by which each is ſuſpended may ſnap in ſunder and drop them both into the gulf of diſap-pointment. And this perhaps is what is but too frequently experienced by thoſe whoſe benevolence does not get the better of their zeal. Our *obedience* to the NEW *command-ment* is the *beſt evidence* we can give of our *attachment* to the *true faith*. And he who would " Earneſtly contend for the Faith " once delivered to the Saints" ſhould not omit to ſtudy with peculiar attention the thirteenth Chapter of Saint Paul's firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians. A chapter which ought to be regiſtered in the memory of every ra-tional being. It is the very beſt practical ex-

poſition of the *New Commandment* that ever was written. It is only to be regretted that the word *charity* is there made uſe of inſtead of the word *love*, For however ſynonymous theſe words may formerly have been in our language, it is evident that they are not, in the preſent age, made uſe of to convey the ſame idea. The word *charity*, in the above-mentioned chapter, comprehends in its meaning *the chriſtian virtue of* UNIVERSAL LOVE, which it is the duty of every individual to cheriſh, to practice, and to expand.

As long as we appeal, and are permitted to appeal, to the Scriptures for a vindication of our faith, we are, at leaſt, entitled to ſome ſmall ſhare of attention, and may expect to experience from others, who admit the authenticity of the ſame, a portion of that univerſal love which ſhould be extended from *each* to *all*. If, as *Trinitarians*, we are not to be claſſed among thoſe who are " moſt " reſpectable for their ability, their learning, " and their piety among chriſtians,"* it is

* See Dr. Prieſtley's Addreſs to the Jews prefixed to his Diſcourſe on the Reſurrection of Jeſus.

devoutly

devoutly to be hoped, for the credit and honour of the doctrine we profeſs to believe, that there are none among us who are afraid to make a publick avowal of our ſentiments. None can bear ſo well to be laughed at as thoſe who are conſcious that they do not deſerve to meet with ſuch behaviour from others. As long as men have courage to go to church " a general declaration in favour of *unitari-* " *aniſm*" is not likely to take place. But they who can judge of the goodneſs of a tree by any better criterion than the fruit it produces, are at liberty to exerciſe their judgment in ſuch a way as may be moſt profitable to themſelves. The *motive* that is *unſeen* may be *gueſſed* at, but it cannot be *aſcertained:* It *may be* " timidity, or ſome other motive," as you obſerve; but ſurely you would not have the imprudence to accuſe that man of timidity who ſhould approach you ſword in hand and demand your money or your life! Apparent inconſiſtencies, you know, are not eaſily reconciled. Fear and courage never preſide over the ſame perſon at the ſame inſtant of time. You tell the Jews that they are not " to judge of the number of *Unita-*

" *rians* from thoſe who openly profeſs them-
" ſelves to be ſo;" but the Jew who cannot penetrate into the reaſon of this ſalutary caution muſt be much too blind to profit by your advice; and if he does diſcern the drift of it, he will look on that advice with ineffable contempt.

It is always beſt to meet every obſtacle in a fair and open manner. As long as men openly profeſs to be *Trinitarians* they ought to have the credit of being ſuch; but in this caſe the number of *Trinitarians* would far exceed the number of *Unitarians*. In attempting to remove this difficulty you have not heſitated to invert an ancient rule to anſwer a temporary purpoſe. *Ye ſhall know them by their fruits* is now no longer eſteemed by you as a proper rule to direct our judgment when we are about to make an obſervation concerning the progreſs of *unitarianiſm*. *Trinitarians* you may be aſſured will avow their principles readily and openly, without either fear or remorſe; but *Unitarians* you are ready to ſuppoſe act a more *diſguiſed* and *artful* part.—*Theſe* abound in churches profeſſedly *Trinitarian*. *Theſe* follow not *publickly* the good ſhepherd

ſhepherd who ſtretches out his arms to embrace, and who employs his pen to defend, direct, and animate, them. NO. *Theſe* follow *thoſe* whoſe *principles* they *reprobate*, and whoſe *mode of worſhip* they "*very ſeriouſly object to.*"* We are certainly much indebted to them for their complaiſance; yet we cannot but fear that they will feel themſelves to be under no great obligations to you, Sir, for expoſing in ſo publick a manner as you have done, the meanneſs of their ſpirit, and the duplicity of their heart. But, even of them, I will hope better things than thoſe which you have written.

You ſay "Things are ripening apace for "a general declaration in favour of *unitari*"*aniſm* whenever circumſtances ſhall be fa"vourable to it."† What the circumſtances are which can be more favourable to it at any future period than at the preſent moment, can be known only to thoſe who are intruſted with ſo profound a ſecret. The

* See Dr. Prieſtley's Preface to his Diſcourſe on the Reſurrection of Jeſus.

† Dr. Prieſtley's Addreſs to the Jews prefixed to his Diſcourſe on the Reſurrection of Jeſus.

preſent is a moment of liberty; but whether liberty is, in future, to be the excluſive privilege of *unitarian* chriſtians or not, we have it not in our power to determine. All yet appears to be involved in myſtery and darkneſs. "When this great abomination" of addreſſing ourſelves to Chriſt as God "ſhall be re-"moved, chriſtianity," you tell the *Jews*, "will reſume its priſtine vigour and enlighten "and bleſs the world."* But *we*, as Chriſtians, are particularly commanded, Good Sir, to *beware of* FALSE *prophets*. And as we cannot reaſon but from what we know, we cannot but wiſh to be informed in what the *great humility* and *condeſcenſion* of *Chriſt* could *conſiſt*, and in what *ſenſe* he could be ſaid to *take upon himſelf* the *form* of a *Servant*, and *be made* in the *likeneſs* of a *Man*, if he was not ſomething *more* than a *mere human being* like *Moſes*, as *you* repreſent him to *have been?* If *previous* to his entering into *this* world he poſſeſſed no *Brightneſs of his Father's Glory*, and no *Expreſs Image of his Perſon*, in what could HIS *humiliation* and *condeſcenſion* in

* Ibid.

coming

coming into the world *differ* from that of *other mere human beings?* He could not have *taken* upon him a reſolution to have come into the world *previous* to his *Exiſtence* any more than any other human being could have done.--- And there is no condeſcenſion or humility in being what it is not in our power to avoid being. If a noble Lord ſends you a letter by his ſervant, you may be under an obligation to the noble Lord for the information he has communicated to you; but you are under no obligation to his ſervant for condeſcending to bring you the letter, and for humbling himſelf ſo far as to execute the buſineſs his Lord ſent him to perform; becauſe, in all this, he had done nothing more than what he was commanded to do. It is always expected that he who is a ſervant ſhould perform the duty of a ſervant, whether he is a ſervant by *choice* or *neceſſity*.

We have been told by an *unitarian* writer of no ancient date,* "That the doctrine of the "Trinity is an inſult on the underſtanding

* See Mr. Frend's Second Addreſs to the Inhabitants of Canterbury, printed in 1788.

" of mankind;" but he who has an underſtanding of his own will not build his faith on the judgment of another. It cannot but provoke a ſmile when we meet with a writer who is ſo ready to recommend his own underſtanding as the unerring ſtandard of truth. From ſuch preſumption Good Lord deliver all *Trinitarians!*

The reaſonableneſs of all religious worſhip depends on its conſiſtency with, and conformity to, thoſe rules of faith that are contained in Scripture, and to the practices of thoſe to whom the propagation of religious knowledge was, by divine appointment, originally committed. Poſitive declarations are no infallible indications of truth. When oppoſed to a plain narrative of ſimple fact, they appear but like a lighted candle in the preſence of the noon-day ſun. Was we but diſpoſed to take a retroſpective view of the practice of chriſtians in thoſe times when the doctrines of faith were unadulterated by the opinions of men, and the mode of worſhip undiſturbed by the clamour of pragmatical ſchiſmaticks, we ſhould find, from Saint Luke's account of the matter, which is, I think,

think, as clear as words can make it, that as ſoon as *Jeſus* aſcended into Heaven, his DISCIPLES *from whom* he was *then ſeparated* WORSHIPPED HIM; and then returned to *Jeruſalem* with great joy. Now ſuch a plain and ſimple declaration of Scripture as this is, in which Doctor Clark himſelf could find no ambiguity or defect, is ſufficient to ſet aſide every *human* attempt that can poſſibly be made with a view to deter *trinitarian* Chriſtians from worſhipping Chriſt as God. Here we have a precedent of the moſt deciſive nature, which brings with it more weight than the ableſt arguments of the moſt accompliſhed writer. For if the Diſciples of our Saviour, were, in this inſtance, perfectly innocent, and their conduct at all to be depended upon, we have the higheſt and moſt convincing teſtimony that language can poſſibly convey to us, of the propriety of adopting and practicing ſo primitive an example. It was an act of adoration that flowed from irreſiſtible conviction. Until *now* they might have *believed* the *Divinity* of our *Saviour*; but *this* was the moment in which they had *occular demonſtration* of it, by

ſeeing

ſeeing him *aſcend* into *Heaven*, and confirm beyond all contradiction the truth of what he had before told them——*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* Thus thoſe who worſhip Chriſt, worſhip not Chriſt as *Man*, but as God by *communication* of *divinity* from Him who is I AM.

But on *unitarian principles* we muſt come to concluſions the very reverſe of thoſe which would otherwiſe appear to be juſt and admiſſible. Of theſe I will take notice of a few only.

Epheſ. 3; 9. "God, who created all things by Jeſus Chriſt."——If Jeſus Chriſt was a Man *only*, then—God created all things by a *Man*; which is not true; becauſe we are told that all things elſe were made before *Man* was created.

John 17; 5. "O Father, Glorify thou me with thine own ſelf, with the Glory which I had with thee *before* the *world was.*" It ſhould ſeem then that Chriſt had Glory with God before *He* (Chriſt) *exiſted*; which is abſurd: Or, it may be ſaid that Chriſt had Glory with God, as *Man*, *before* the *world*,

or

or *Man*, was made; which implies a manifeſt contradiction.

John 5; 19. "What things ſoever he (the Father) doth, theſe alſo doth the Son likewiſe." On the ſuppoſition that the Son was *only* a *Man*, it follows—that what things ſoever God doth, theſe alſo doth one particular *Man* do likewiſe. In this caſe the power of *one Man*, or, *one great Prophet*, is equal to the power of God.—But can there be any thing inconſiſtent in ſuch a ſuppoſition as this?

Col. 2; 9. "In him (Chriſt) dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily."—So then all the fulneſs of the Godhead dwelleth in one who is only a *creature!*—a mere human being like Moſes!

Acts 3; 6. "In the Name of Jeſus Chriſt of Nazareth riſe up and walk."—In the Name of a *Man* like myſelf I command thee to riſe up and walk!

Acts 7; 59. "Lord Jeſus receive my Spirit."——Maſter, I believe thee to be only a human being like myſelf; and under this perſuaſion it is that I now pray unto thee to receive my Spirit!

Heb.

Heb. 1 ; 6. " When he (God) bringeth in the firſt begotten into the world, he ſaith, And let all the *Angels* of God *worſhip* him." When he (God) bringeth in a great Prophet into the world, he ſaith ; And let all the *Angels* of God *worſhip* him ; but if *Men*, like *himſelf*, ſhould *worſhip* him, let *them* be accounted *Idolators* ; for it is not proper that *Men* ſhould *worſhip* HIM whom I command *all my Angels* to *worſhip*.

Mat. 2 ; 1, 2. " There came WISE MEN from the *Eaſt* to *Jeruſalem*, Saying, Where is he that is *born* King of the Jews ? for we have ſeen *his* Star in the Eaſt, and are come to WORSHIP HIM."—It ſeems then that *Wiſe Men* have been *Idolators*, as well as the weak and fooliſh amongſt us ; for behold ! *they* came from the *Eaſt* to *Jeruſalem* to *worſhip* a *mere man !*

Thus does the *unitarian principle* appear to be as inconſiſtent with the general tenor of the ſacred writings in the judgment of *Trinitarians* ; as the *trinitarian principle* can appear to be abſurd or ridiculous in the judgment of *Unitarians*. I cannot however take my leave of this ſubject without expreſſing a moſt

moſt ardent wiſh that ſome plan may in time be propoſed, recommended, and adopted, that may contribute to make the publick worſhip of God univerſally unobjectionable to all Chriſtians. But at the ſame time I cannot think that a conſtant and perſevering endeavour to make any particular deſcription of Chriſtians appear ridiculous and contemptible in the eye of the world, is one of the readieſt, or one of the moſt likely, means to accelerate a plan of this kind. As we all hope to meet together in a better world, let us all ſtrive to aſſemble together in a pious and friendly manner in this. In the mean time it cannot eſcape the notice of the ſerious and intelligent among Chriſtians that, in order to compoſe a plan of this kind, ſome important alterations muſt neceſſarily take place in our publick creeds, and in many parts of our Church Service.—The doctrine of Chriſt's pre-exiſtence——of the miraculous conception—and of original ſin, muſt naturally fall to the ground. And many paſſages that are now to be met with in Scripture hiſtory muſt, in conformity to this plan, be omitted to be read before publick aſſemblies

of

of Chriſtians, for fear of giving offence to ſome weak and incredulous brethren; and many texts muſt be tranſlated in a manner entirely different from that in which they now ſtand. To take notice of theſe paſſages would be to tranſcribe a greater part of the ſacred writings than many are aware of. I ſhall therefore content myſelf with having made the obſervation, and will leave my readers to examine the truth of it if they feel themſelves ſo diſpoſed. It would be ſuperfluous to obſerve that, in conformity to the *unitarian* principle, the following notions among many others muſt be entirely exploded; the notion that many prophets have been ſent into the world expreſsly to foretel the coming of a mere man into it;---the notion that the ſun was darkened---that the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom---that the earth quaked---that the rocks were rent----that the graves were opened---and---that ſaints aroſe and came out of them; and all this becauſe a mere human being voluntarily gave up the ghoſt while he was hanging upon the croſs! Such ſtories are ſurely beneath the attention of thoſe who

who believe that Jeſus Chriſt was not God as well as Man!---Theſe are notions that every man muſt endeavour to get rid of as well as he can! And thoſe who cannot get rid of them muſt content themſelves to be laughed at for their weakneſs, and ridiculed for their *idolatry* as it is termed!

Since I have ſtumbled upon the word *Idolatry* again, I will here juſt take leave to expreſs my thoughts concerning the meaning of it, becauſe in page 15 I have given a definition of it that may not be generally approved of. All *idolatry* is, as far as I can conceive of the import of the word, an homage that is paid to an *inferiour* being, by thoſe who acknowledge, or have been inſtructed to believe, that there *is* a being *ſuperiour* to that inferiour being. A man who falls down to the ſtock of a tree cannot be guilty of *Idolatry* if he has no knowledge of any other God than that which he worſhips. Thoſe who know not God may worſhip *ſomething*; but they cannot worſhip *that ſomething* as God; which they muſt do in order to render ſuch worſhip an act of *Idolatry*. If this was not the caſe they muſt be ſaid to worſhip a

thing

thing which they *have* an idea of, in the ſtead of a Being whom they have *no* idea of; which is abſurd. Where men live in a ſtate of total ignorance, their adoration is paid to the object of their worſhip, and to nothing elſe. From ſuch ignorance they cannot deliver *themſelves*, nor ſay, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" By *Idolatry* therefore I think is clearly to be underſtood *a departure from true worſhip*. But how can a man *depart* from a mode of worſhip in which he was never inſtructed, and with which he was never acquainted! Can a man depart from a city that he never entered? Or, Can he forget a rule that he never knew? If he can, he may be an *Idolator* for not worſhipping that God of whom he had never heard; and for not calling on him of whom he had never formed a ſingle idea. Before therefore we can determine how juſtly men may be ſaid to be Idolators, we muſt learn in what inſtances they have departed from the knowledge that has been communicated to them. For he that worſhips what he *has* an idea of, cannot be guilty of idolatry merely for not worſhipping what he has *no* idea of. All *Idolatry* is ſin; but where there is no law there can be no

tranſ-

tranſgreſſion; and where there is *no knowledge* of God *there* there can be no ſin in not worſhipping God; and if there is no ſin there can be no *Idolatry*; otherwiſe Idolatry is not ſin. If Trinitarians believe Chriſt *is God* they commit *no Idolatry* by worſhipping him; but if they believe he is *not God* they are certainly *Idolators* in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word for worſhipping *Him* as *God* contrary to their judgment and opinion.

Admitting the *Trinitarian* to be as weak and as ridiculous a being as you have repreſented him to be; yet it does not follow, even then, that he is one whit *more weak*, or *more ridiculous* than his *mighty antagoniſt*. The juſtneſs of this remark ſhall be ſupported by a few obſervations on ſome aſſertions of yours in your "*Letters to Mr. Burke.*"

"The civil eſtabliſhment of religion is ſo "far from making it reſpectable, that it is "the very thing that makes it contemptible."

This is nothing more than ſaying that the domeſtic eſtabliſhment of a family is ſo far from making it reſpectable, that it is the very thing that makes it contemptible. But will not that which is uſeful on a ſmall ſcale

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be proportionably ſo when extended on a large one?

" Civil eſtabliſhments of chriſtianity were " altogether unknown in the early ages, and " gained ground by very ſlow degrees, as " other corruptions and abuſes did."

This is *your* opinion, Sir; but the moſt probable opinion is, I think, that Civil eſtabliſhments of chriſtianity were altogether unknown in the early ages, for the ſame reaſon that the arts and ſciences are unknown to thoſe who have never applied themſelves to the ſtudy and application of them; and that for this reaſon they gained ground by very ſlow degrees, as all improvements in knowledge, and inventions in life, neceſſarily do.

Aſſertions of this kind will be beſt refuted by a retroſpective view of the advantages and diſadvantages that have, from time to time, ariſen to mankind from the *influence* of eſtabliſhments. An impartial view of this kind, on a large ſcale, will not, I will venture to affirm, prove the projectors, framers, and maintainers, of civil eſtabliſhments of religion to have been deſtitute of ſound wiſdom, and conſummate diſcretion. I do not recollect to have

have read of any age, ſince the promulgation of Chriſtianity, in which the world appears to have been more generally enlightened—in which Religion appears to have been more univerſally propagated,--or, more extenſively ſtudied and attended to, than in the preſent. Nor do I know when ſuperſtition, ignorance, cruelty, and malevolence have been leſs common in any nation or country than they are now in this kingdom. And to what are theſe advantages principally owing if not, under the bleſſing of God, to a few of thoſe wholeſome laws, principles, and regulations, which form the eſſential outlines of our government?——*Here* the welfare of Religion is connected with that of the ſtate----the advancement of knowledge is ſecured by an ability to reward thoſe who acquire it;---and the practice of piety is rendered advantageous to individuals by an opportunity which is hereby given to prefer, or reward, thoſe who are diligent in promoting it by precept and example.

I ſhould rejoice to ſee an accurate ſtatement of the advantages and diſadvantages which the eſtabliſhed Religion in this king-

dom is productive of to its numerous and reſpectable inhabitants. And I am firmly perſuaded that the members of the Church of England would have no reaſon to dread the appearance of ſuch a ſtatement in the world. The moſt partial reader would then be able to ſee on which ſide the balance really does lie.

" It is the ſyſtem of church eſtabliſhments " that always has produced, and that ever " muſt produce, unbelievers."

This, Sir, is a mode of aſſerting not difficult to be practiſed. Men may write according to this plan with little thought, and with ſtill leſs exertion. I muſt confeſs I have vanity enough to think I could frame a variety of ſentences on a plan of this kind. Give me leave to preſent you with a few as a ſpecimen.---It is the ſyſtem of navigation that always has produced, and that ever muſt produce, land-men.---It is the ſyſtem of truth that always has produced, and that ever muſt produce, liars.---It is the ſyſtem of revelation that always has produced, and that ever muſt produce, atheiſts.—It is the ſyſtem of liberty that always has produced,

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and that ever muſt produce, ſlaves.---It is the ſyſtem of peace that always has produced, and that ever muſt produce, warriours.---It is the ſyſtem of honeſty that always has produced, and that ever muſt produce, rogues.--- In ſhort, It is the ſyſtem of wiſdom that always has produced, and that ever muſt produce, fools. It is, in fact, ſo eaſy to conſtruct ſentences of this, and a ſimilar kind, that a man muſt be idle indeed who cannot, at this rate, write an innumerable number of books in the courſe of a very ſhort life; but like *this*, they may be better calculated to convey light to a candle than inſtruction to the mind. Round aſſertions of this kind have, I confeſs, a very pretty effect on the ear. Beſides it is not common for them to call the reaſoning powers from a ſtate of inaction. They are ſhort, clear, and expreſſive; and in ſentences that are ſhort, clear, and expreſſive, there can be nothing difficult, ambiguous, or perplexing. We know our man, and we have no reaſon to doubt of the goodneſs of his intention. All his remarks are founded in *truth*, or in ſomething *oppoſite* to it, which vulgar writers term *falſe-*

hood. We, Trinitarians, are ridiculous beings, and to addreſs us in language that is not ridiculous would be honouring us too much.

" Time was when your church pretended " to *fear where no fear was,* and being then " vigorous, her cries were heard as the roar- " ing of a lion. Of late ſhe has been ſo " feeble, that we only amuſe ourſelves with " them; and now the danger is really tranſ- " ferred from us to herſelf."

Now had you, *Unitarians,* been generous good ſort of people you would not have *amuſed* yourſelves with the *feeble* CRIES of an almoſt exhauſted enemy. In this reſpect your conduct is pitiful indeed! Should the worm but ſmite the gourd that thou haſt prepared for thyſelf, to be a ſhadow over thee; like *Jonah* thou wouldeſt do well to be angry even unto death, when thou perceiveſt that one mightier than thyſelf is our preſerver.

If danger is really transferred from you to us, it is a ſubject for *gratitude* and *thankfulneſs* on *your part*; and not for *amuſement* and *triumph!* But here the feelings of the man are

are loſt in the reſentment of the writer, and the ſenſibility of the heart is governed by the propenſity of the will. After all, the anticipation of evil, like the anticipation of good, is not much to be depended upon. He that putteth on his armour ſhould not rejoice like one that pulleth it off. While we are living we are not invulnerable; and whatever our opinions may be, the love and the reſpect of the virtuous and the good among mankind, is the beſt portion that the world can beſtow upon us. A flame that has been kindled by a paſſion for controverſy is ſeldom extinguiſhed by a principle of love. The conquerors give no quarter, and the conquered eſcape no ridicule.

When *Amaziah* had defeated the *Edomites*, elated with ſucceſs, and vain of his conſequence, the pride of his heart was confined to no decent bounds. The circle of his dominion was too ſmall for the ſpirit that governed it. Little minds expect great and numerous attentions. And to be diſappointed of theſe is enough to provoke the reſentment of a king. Diſſatisfied at home, he meddled with others to his own hurt, until the

wild beaſt that was in *Lebanon*, rouſed by the reſtleſs impudence of the thiſtle that had challenged the cedar that was in *Lebanon*, ruſhed from the deſart of uncultivated life,--trod down the thiſtle---laid waſte his buildings, and diveſted him of his choiceſt treaſures.---The inference is obvious.---What has happened may happen again; for like cauſes produce ſimilar effects. Read the book of *Obadiah* and determine for yourſelf.

Upon the cooleſt and moſt impartial review of your writings, I cannot but believe that the warmth with which you oppoſe *trinitarian* principles, ariſes chiefly from the conſideration that thoſe principles are countenanced by an eſtabliſhment peculiarly calculated for the preſervation of them. If, indeed, the law, or the church, *compelled* men to become *Trinitarians* it would *then* be laudable to "*cry aloud and not ſpare.*"

"The alliance of any ſtate with ſo weak "and tottering a church as yours, muſt "either be diſſolved, or both muſt fall toge-"ther. The diſſolution of this fatal alliance "is ſtill the object of our moſt ardent "wiſhes."

The

The former part of this quotation will be beſt illuſtrated by a tale.

Three boys had been amuſing themſelves in a play-room: Two of them had been diverting themſelves for a conſiderable time by building pigeon-houſes with cards. After many fruitleſs attempts to rear a ſingle building that would bear a trifling interruption of the air, they propoſed to build two in ſuch a manner that each ſhould be connected with, and, in ſome ſort, ſupported by, the other. After repeated trials, and perſevering exertions, they fortunately accompliſhed the object of their wiſhes. Scarcely had they time to congratulate each other on their ſucceſs, when the boy whoſe attention had been employed in the purſuit of other diverſions, viewing the ſuperſtructure that they had raiſed, and knowing himſelf to have had no hand in the planning or rearing of it, exclaimed with all imaginable eagerneſs and ſurprize---- *What Fools! Why if one of theſe buildings ſhould fall the other muſt fall with it!*---Well! Maſter *Joey!* replied one of the architects, and do you think that we ſhould have begun a work of this kind if we had not thought of

that

that *before!* But you are always bluſtering and finding fault with things that you have no hand in! Now I'll be hanged if I think that you, with all your wiſdom, could make a better, or a ſtronger, building, of the ſort, than we have done! So if you don't like it you may e'en go to your own quarters, and leave us to admire it at our leiſure!

With reſpect to your wiſhes for a diſſolution of the alliance that ſubſiſts between church and ſtate, I believe nobody ſuſpects the ardency of them. Whether the efficacy of them may not be counteracted by the fervent prayers of thoſe whoſe ſentiments differ from yours we are yet to learn. He that would RULE, being a ſubject, muſt firſt endeavour to DIVIDE. Your *zeal* to *divide* is *indiſputable*; and from hence we may fairly preſume that your *ambition* to *rule* is *irrefragable*. By *diviſions* in *Religion* you tell us we ſhall "ſooner arrive at a *rational uniformity*." This, Sir, is but ſaying, only in a different kind of way, that by ſeparating twenty units we ſhall give additional powers to each. The paragraph in which this declaration is to be found, muſt, I think, have been written

at

at a time when you have been eagerly contemplating on the havock and devaſtation which you ſuppoſed your own writings would contribute to make, when they came to be circulated in the world among a parcel of *droniſh Trinitarians*. Reflect for a moment on yourſelf, Sir; and do not ſuffer your diſcriminating powers to be inebriated by the vapour that ariſes from the influence of an imaginary ſuperiority of diſcernment above thoſe whoſe learning, whoſe underſtanding, whoſe opinions, and whoſe abilities, are not leſs reſpectable than your own. Common ſenſe is the beſt ſubſtitute for uncommon learning that men can poſſibly obtain: If it does not raiſe them from obſcurity, or protect them from ridicule, it will at leaſt afford them a ſatisfaction in the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of their own opinions, that neither you nor the world can poſſibly deprive them of.

" Every controverſy in which churchmen
" have meddled, has been to their diſadvan-
" tage. The heads of the church therefore
" now wiſely diſcourage all controverſy. But
" even this policy will not avail them long.

" Every

" Every clergyman is not wiſe, and *fools*, as " they ſay, will be *meddling*; and every " meddling is to their hurt, and that of " their cauſe."

The firſt of theſe aſſertions is much more eaſy to be written than it is to be proved. It is founded neither on fact nor on argument. It is matter of opinion only, and as ſuch it is entirely ſubject to the judgment of the reader. Of what *has* been done your opponents are capable of judging with as much accuracy as yourſelf. Knowledge appears to the beſt advantage when it is clothed with humility.

The ſecond aſſertion *may* be founded in truth; I devoutly hope it is; for it will occaſion a ſcarcity of fuel which will damp, and, in time, effectually extinguiſh, the fire that an oppoſite conduct might only have ſerved to have fed. Your apprehenſion of the fruitleſſneſs of the attempt inſpires you with new hopes, and from the conduct of *fools* you mean to pluck freſh laurels of victory and ſucceſs. That every clergyman is *not wiſe* we will permit you to ſay, becauſe we will not venture to affirm that every *unitarian is wiſe*. I know of no reaſon why we ſhould

ſhould believe that there is not as large a proportion of learned, wiſe, able, and conſcientious, men, among *Unitarians*, as there is among *Trinitarians*; but why there ſhould be a leſs proportion of men of the above deſcription among the latter claſs than there is among the former, I ſhall leave you to determine in a manner becoming your wiſdom and impartiality. For your own ſake only was the remark worthy of obſervation. Do not, by your own mode of writing, baniſh modeſty and candour from the world. They are not the worſt companions that are to be met with in it. In the firſt converts to chriſtianity, firmneſs and humility, courage and modeſty, were ſo eminently united that they won, for their poſſeſſors, the favour, and obtained for them, the reſpect, of almoſt all mankind.

"*Fools*," it is true, "will be meddling;" and I have heard it ſeriouſly aſſerted that——————No, I will not ſay what I have heard. But this I will ſay.—That I never yet thought a man to be one whit the wiſer for calling others *fools*.

The

The concluding clauſe of the quotation, being of the ſame kind as the firſt ſentence, is incapable either of confirmation, or refutation. Like that it can be determined by opinion *only*.

Opinion is the play-thing of life; but truth is the buſineſs of men. If we were but ſeriouſly diſpoſed to think for ourſelves, and to carry our thoughts and obſervations *into* our ſtudies, inſtead of bringing them *from thence*, we ſhould feel ourſelves much more at eaſe; and ſhould be able to write with much leſs anxiety, though not with leſs ſincerity, than perhaps we generally do. For ſome of us, at beſt, are but little better than temporizing mortals; who, before we can expreſs a ſentiment, or an opinion, muſt needs run through a number of ancient authors to know whether that ſentiment, or that opinion, can be defended by a precedent; and if it cannot we perhaps abandon it for ever. But this ſurely is not acting like rational beings, who ſhould be careful to publiſh their own ſentiments and opinions, and not content themſelves with dreſſing up thoſe they may already have met with in a new form. Such a mode

of

of proceeding is a bar to all improvement, and to all originality of thought. Whatever our ſentiments and opinions are as chriſtians, it ill becomes us to be ſolicitous about the opinions of others concerning the articles of faith which we think proper to profeſs and believe. It is ſufficient that we are ſatisfied with them ourſelves, knowing of whom, and from whence, we have learned them. No other ſolicitude will afford us any ſolid comfort when we are about to make our appearance before a Tribunal ſuperior to any that can be formed by imperfect beings like ourſelves. The volumes of former ages, compoſed by human beings, may be thruſt aſide to make room for thoſe of the preſent day. Theſe in their turn muſt give place to thoſe that ſhall come after them. While the Scriptures, we are aſſured, will remain until the day of univerſal conflagration, uninjured by the aſſaults of time; and unconſumed by the adverſaries of Religion. Conſecrated by the God of heaven for the uſe of man, they ſhall remain for a guide to his conduct in this life, and a companion in his progreſs towards a better.

Enjoy,

Enjoy, Sir, the privilege of judging for yourſelf; but do not engage too warmly in judging of others. Do not endeavour to inflame the *minds* or to irritate the *paſſions* of mankind. It was not the practice of the primitive chriſtians to do either of theſe. In this country the people of the preſent age are too much enlightened to ſuffer themſelves to be *intentionally* affronted with impunity. The character of *Unitarians* is as reſpectable as that of any other claſs of men; but the tyranny of learning is as inſupportable as the tyranny of government. The liberty of thinking and of judging for ourſelves can never be too highly eſteemed. While we are in full poſſeſſion of this liberty we ought not to be ſo devoid of candour as to write diſreſpectfully of thoſe who have the ſame pretenſions to it, and the ſame right to enjoy it, as we ourſelves have. Why ſhould you, or I, love or reſpect a man the leſs for differing in opinion from us? Are either of us accountable to any one elſe for the opinions of another? Silence beſt becomes thoſe who cannot ſpeak without betraying a manifeſt inclination to offend. And thoſe who cannot write without

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diſcovering a diſpoſition to *quarrel* rather than *convince* do but inform the world that they know not when to lay down their pen.

The Scriptures are open to us all. They are always the ſame. But human judgment, as well public as private, is continually varying. The doctrine of to-day may give place to the reaſoning of to-morrow. Attentive to the voice that thunders from afar, we may omit to regard the inſtruction that is to be met with at home. The BIBLE,* that well known repoſitory of Chriſtian knowledge, contains the *Rule*, the *whole Rule*, and the *only Rule of Faith* to which we can apply for the removal of our doubts, or the eſtabliſhment of our principles, in matters of Religion. And whatſoever you may think concerning *trinitarian* Chriſtians, I am fully perſuaded that none of thoſe among mankind, who believe the Scriptures ſincerely, and endeavour to believe them in the true ſenſe, can poſſibly be proper objects of *ridicule* or *contempt*.

* The word *Bible* is here uſed in its largeſt ſenſe, as comprehending both the *Old* and the *New Teſtament*.

With the greateſt reſpect for your learning and abilities, and with all proper acknowledgment of many valuable performances with which you have favoured the world, I beg leave to ſubſcribe myſelf,

Sir,

A Friend to Union, Harmony,
and Concord;

WILLIAM PETTMAN.

Sandwich,
March 25th, 1792.

FINIS.